of the recent Jubilee Celebration (printed in SCIENCE, IV., p. 68) appears to be very unfortunate. Lord Kelvin said finely:

"But when I think how infinitely little is all that I have done I cannot feel pride; I only see the great kindness of my scientific comrades and all of my friends in crediting me for so much. One word characterizes the most strenuous of the efforts for the advancement of science that I have made perseveringly during 55 years; that word is failure. I know no more of electric and magnetic force or of the relation between ether, electricity and ponderable matter, or of chemical affinity, than I knew and tried to teach my students of natural philosophy 50 years ago in my first session as professor. Something of sadness must come of failure; but in the pursuit of science inborn necessity to make the effort brings with it much of the *certaminis gaudia*, and saves the naturalist from being wholly miserable, perhaps even allows him to be fairly happy, in his daily work. And what splendid compensation for philosophical failures we have had in the admirable discoveries by observation and experiment on the properties of matter, and in the exquisitely beneficent applications of science to the use of mankind with which these 50 years have so abounded!"

We are informed that this is 'a false note' and 'false sentiment.' We are told that Lord Kelvin ought to have said:

"Science in my day has been most prolific of blessing to mankind; it is proceeding apace with its appointed task of enabling men to understand *for practical purposes* the world in which they live, and what shall be the limit to its achievements in that direction no one can foretell. As to the 'riddle of the universe,' of which we sometimes hear, that lies beyond its ken; only when thought ceases to be conditioned will that riddle—not be read but—disappear."

Lord Kelvin has doubtless also read Mr. Spencer's works, and in any case was not regretting that he had not seen the Holy Grail by means of fasting or 10 grs. of hashish. It was a fine thing to acknowledge in the presence of those who had gathered to celebrate his contributions to science and invention that he had failed to learn what he most desired to teach 'the relation between ether, electricity and ponderable matter.' We remember the reply of the savant when asked a certain question, "Madame, I do not know." "Then what is the use of your science?" "Madame, to be able to answer, 'I do not know.'"

UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL NEWS.

THE chemical laboratory building at the University of Illinois was destroyed by fire on August 17th. The building was three stories high above the basement and contained five laboratories. It was one of the largest and best of its kind in the country and was erected at a cost of $40,000. The fittings, apparatus and supplies are estimated to have brought the entire value to $75,000. The *Scientific American*, from which we take this item, states that it is supposed that the laboratory was struck by lightning, but it seems possible that this, like the recent fire, in the Harvard chemical laboratory, may have been due to spontaneous combustion of chemicals.

IT is commonly supposed that Princeton is 'a rich man's college.' The authorities of the University have, however, issued a pamphlet entitled 'The Cost of an Education at Princeton,' showing that of 54 honor men nearly three-fourths expended only $500 or less annually, and nearly one-half $400 a year or less.

ACCORDING to the *N. Y. Evening Post* the Marquis of Bute has signified his intention of contributing £10,000 to the University of South Wales, to be applied to the purposes of technical education in Wales. The Drapers' Company has also promised £10,000 towards the fund for providing new buildings, and the British government has promised £20,000 on condition that an equal amount be raised by public subscriptions.

WE learn from *Nature* that the Technical Education Board of the London County Council has addressed a letter to the Councils of University and King's Colleges on the subject of the financial assistance to these institutions during the forthcoming session. It is pointed out in this letter that the Board cannot undertake to ensure regular annual grants towards either of these colleges. It is further recommended that the Councils of the two colleges should confer together before making any application for assistance, with a view of coordinating the work now specially carried on in connection with Oriental languages. A question has been raised regarding King's College, as to

whether the Board can legally make a grant to an institution of a denominational character. But since the discussion of these questions will take some time, it is proposed to continue the grants of £1,500 to University College and £1,000 to King's College for next year, on the understanding that such a conference shall be held.

PROF. W. DAMES has been appointed successor to the late Professor Beyrich in geology and paleontology at Berlin, and will also have charge of the collections in geology and paleontology in the Museum of Natural History.

DR. WILHELM WIEN has been promoted to an associate professorship of physics at Berlin.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

THE DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION AND SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Every one who hopes for any good results from the bibliographical conference held this summer in London must be pleased to learn that that body did not see its way to adopt the decimal classification as a foundation for the system to be used in the proposed international index to scientific literature. To adopt that system, even with modifications, would undoubtedly have resulted in a deadlock for the whole science of bibliography, and would have lessened, in a very considerable degree, the usefulness of the international bibliography scheme. And more—it might, if such a thing could be possible, have hampered the progress of science as a whole, as far as scientific work is dependent on the sources of information and the methods of making these sources available.

It is ludicrous to see how certain Belgian, and, surprisingly enough, also English, supporters of the decimal classification are full of enthusiasm over this so-called 'new scientific language,' which is destined to take the place that was held by Latin in olden times. As one of these enthusiasts at great length explained: 'Värme' is a Swedish term, 'Chaleur' is French, 'Heat' is English, and you must know these different languages to be able to make out what these terms mean. But if you write down the magical formula '536,' then, of course, all the world knows everything about it! But if the treatise on '536' should happen to be written in Japanese, and you do not know that language, would you be any happier, if these three figures were written on the top of the title-page?

No completely satisfactory scheme for the classification of the sciences has ever yet been made, and very likely never will. Science is ever progressing, and with each step it knocks some part of your system upside down. And the solution is *not* found by letting odds be even and deciding for all time that '536' shall always mean 'Heat.'

The decimal classification is now being discussed from both sides in French and German bibliographical publications,* and it might result in clearing up the subject of classification as a whole, and in the laying down of some foundation for a flexible scheme that might be used in the international index. And if that be so, the enthusiasts in Bruxelles have done a good work, even if not exactly in the direction they meant.

Some features of the decimal classification might be retained, namely, first of all, the use of decimals, and, perhaps, the form divisions. But the scheme itself is too hastily made up, and contains too many blunders, to be used as it stands, or even as a foundation for the scheme itself.

I suppose there are very few libraries of any consequence that have adopted the scheme unreservedly. It would be interesting to know the standing of those 1000 American libraries using the system that were spoken of in the Bulletin of the *Institut International* in Bruxelles. In the two libraries, where it was first used, Amherst College and Columbia University, it has all been made over again.

It has never been perfectly clear, I think, whether it was devised as a system for arranging books on the shelves of a library, or as a scheme for the classification of knowledge. If you attack it on the grounds of its failure in libraries, its advocates explain that it is mainly a means of classifying knowledge, and *vice versa!*

* The favorable part of the discussion was reviewed at some length in the last number of the *Library Journal*, but it was only mentioned that there was some dissent.